



LighterFootprints

Climate Change Neighbourhood Action Group

www.lighterfootprints.org

Submission from:

Lighter Footprints

with support from:

Albury-Wodonga Sustainability Alliance

Families Facing Climate Change

Locals Into Victoria's Environment (LIVE)

Woodend Integrated Sustainable Energy Inc (WISE)

To:

Premier of Victoria

Climate Change Submission

GPO Box 4912

Melbourne 3001

Climatecare: Landcare as a model for action on sustainability

This submission proposing a Climatecare program is made by Lighter Footprints, a group of concerned residents from Surrey Hills, Canterbury and the local neighbourhood who work together to reduce our own footprints on this earth, supported by Albury-Wodonga Sustainability Alliance, Families Facing Climate Change, LIVE and WISE (see Appendix). We commend the recent Climate Change Summit, the associated A CLIMATE OF OPPORTUNITY Summit Paper, and Victorian Government decision to invite and consider all submissions in response to the Summit Paper, as part of the development of an initial Green Paper. This submission responds to that invitation and addresses major governance challenges associated with the implementation of government policies addressing climate change. This is a model for community engagement and governance which is predicated on policies that would lead to immediate and urgent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. It complements and supports those policies; it does not supplant them.

The challenge of responding to climate change and ensuring the sustainability of our natural environment is the most important facing our current generation. It will shape every aspect of our lives from food security to international trade to medicine. There is no single policy which can respond to every aspect of this challenge. Almost every aspect of policy choice will be affected by the imperative of achieving sustainability of our environment, society and economy. There are already policy choices and technologies available which could achieve major progress.

However, little attention has been paid to the governance required to adopt and implement those policies, create new ideas and convert those ideas into further technological innovations.

This paper proposes a new public-community-partnership (PCP) (Scheurer and Newman forthcoming 2009) between government and local communities to tackle climate change through a Climatecare program. It relates to *A CLIMATE OF OPPORTUNITY Summit Paper* Strategic Directions 6, 7 & 9 -

6. Increasing our knowledge about climate change impacts and adaptive needs and possibilities,

7. Increasing the climate change resilience of the State's regions and communities and

9. Supporting Victorian individuals and communities to get active on climate change

i.e. achieving behavioural change at the personal level through community involvement in applying and executing policy in accordance with government leadership.

Effective action to tackle climate change will require actions at all levels of society and governance – global, national, state, local government and the smallest of communities. This is because to be effective, major changes in behaviour will be required at the most local level but will rely on global cooperation and the authority of national and state legislative powers and policies. Many of these changes will be unpalatable and potentially politically unpopular. Monash researchers Damon Honnery and Paddy Moriarty have estimated that car travel must be reduced by a massive 80% to achieve sustainable CO₂ emissions (Honnery & Moriarty, 2008). Victorians will find it very difficult to adjust to such a huge change. Internationally, strong public protests are already being seen in response to early portents of the changes which will be experienced, such as rapid increases in prices for petroleum based transport fuels – petrol and diesel fuel.

Climate change is the most pervasive and dangerous market failure mankind has known. This market failure is a product of extra-ordinarily long lag times for “market signals” to be recognised, much less have effect, and the capacity of greenhouse gas emitters to externalise the impact of their actions. Cap and trade emissions trading schemes seek to partly redress this failure by re-designing the market to force emitters to recognise their impacts and provide incentives to reduce or eliminate emissions. Only government can enforce such a change to the framework within which business and other emitters operate.

There is abundant evidence that the coercive powers of governments, although a necessary condition, is not a sufficient condition for such changes to be accepted and reflected in behaviour. Attempts by democratic governments to impose and force acceptance of unpopular decisions is fraught with risks of populist backlash and political instability – the very antithesis of the conditions needed for effective, society-wide actions to address climate change.

However, we know from experience and research such as that reported by Arvai that people are much more willing to accept unpalatable policy decisions where they have been involved in the decision-making (Arvai, 2003). The “watermark Australia” project is a remarkable example of the value of giving people the opportunity to become involved in understanding and responding to environmental issues affecting them, their local communities and the nation (The Victorian Women's Trust 2007; Watermark Australia).

It is also known that people are much more accepting of unpalatable changes if they perceive that the changes are affecting members of the community fairly. That is already a key factor

in the global debate – rich and poor nations are seeking evidence that the impact of global measures on their populations will be equitable. Within countries, it has happened in war-time and it has been seen in recent public responses to water shortages in Australia. Governments have provided leadership and introduced rules recognised as generally fair to all.

Accordingly, within Victoria, people require to know that changes affecting them are shared equitably across the State and between individual, household, business and other sources of CO₂ emissions. For example, curbs on fuel for private car use must be matched by those on polluting industries. People also need to know that they have real opportunities to be involved in the actions to implement change.

Community involvement models

Fortunately, Victoria has experience of three contemporary world-class community involvement programs from which to learn in implementing climate change and sustainability policy, linking local community with government. These are Landcare, aspects of the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and Watermark Australia.

Landcare was developed and introduced in Victoria in the 1980s to address land degradation through government support for local community action (Curtis & Lockwood, 2000). Landcare groups are concentrated in rural areas and membership is largely landholders. Landcare was adopted nationally and now:

Landcare is a uniquely Australian partnership between the community, government and business to 'do something practical' about protecting and repairing our environment. More than 4,000 volunteer community landcare groups - including bushcare and urban landcare, rivercare, coastcare and sustainable agriculture groups - are tackling land degradation in every corner of Australia (Landcare Australia, undated).

Landcare provides a ready-made, proven and widely known model on which to base a partnership between government and communities to address climate change issues and help people throughout Victoria make the necessary changes to behaviour and practices. Group members learn from each other with the support of professional support staff and they help restore and conserve areas threatened with degradation. Their role is already defined so broadly as to readily embrace climate change issues. It exists “to help protect our natural environment” and some Landcare groups are using the language of sustainability (Landcare Victoria, undated). In practice, Landcare plays a valuable role in building social capital in addition to successfully addressing environmental land management issues (Curtis et al., 2000).

The success of Landcare and other land management bodies which complement it lies in -

1. Articulating and communicating separate roles for community groups and regional planning bodies.
2. Linking local community groups and regional planning bodies using Catchment Management Committees in ways that empower and resource local communities, facilitate effective regional planning, ensure accountability to national stakeholders, and support adaptive management approaches.
3. Developing rigorous and transparent cost sharing principles that can be used to allocate public money for work on private land where there are community benefits.
4. Development of an agency culture that supports community participation.

5. Creating robust, healthy community- agency partnerships.
6. Acknowledging the importance of professional management of volunteer programs.
7. Identifying flexible policy packages to accommodate the diversity of landholders' circumstances and motivations, including incentives for landholders to maintain the supply of public benefits, particularly for biodiversity conservation (Curtis et al., 2000 pp.70-71).

These features are readily adaptable to a Climatecare program to involve the community in tackling climate change and moving towards sustainable living.

However, there are lessons from other programs which could be added to strengthen the model.

CFA model

CFA brigades are remarkably effective in drawing men and women into community service. The CFA is one of the world's largest volunteer organisations of its type. In both rural and outer metropolitan areas, local brigades build awareness, offer education and advice to people in their communities on how to modify their behaviour and practices to reduce fire risks to themselves and their neighbourhoods and train their own members,. As with Landcare, professional staff provide expert support and training. Government assists with capital equipment and specialist facilities (Country Fire Authority).

Watermark Australia

The third model familiar to many Victorians is Watermark Australia. The project was

... a process of learning and community conversations on water from early 2005 to mid 2007. ... The essence of the *Watermark* Australia process was that ordinary people (brought) together small groups, meeting monthly to discuss water, then sharing their thoughts, anecdotes and 'folk-wisdom', bringing it all back to the *Watermark* Australia team.

What emerged was a shared vision for the future, a program of guiding principles and decisive action on water; people working together like never before, with new information, confidence and agreement to adopt solutions for water on many levels - households, local communities, regions, states, and nationally (*Watermark* Australia).

As with Landcare and CFA Brigades, Watermark was supported by expert advice and a secretariat. The secretariat helped identify and brief community leaders who convened local groups. Notes were developed to help group leaders stimulate discussion and assist groups to develop their knowledge and thinking on the issues. Scientists helped generate simply expressed technical information and also received feedback on public perceptions of key issues. There were two dialogues - series of discussions - the first building knowledge followed by a review by the secretariat and scientists of group outputs and the second aiming to identify prospective actions. The three-way exchange of views and information between (i) the secretariat and scientific experts, (ii) groups and the secretariat and (iii) groups and scientists was crucial in individuals moving progressively from holding opinions to accepting responsibilities for issues ("ownership of issues"), a preparedness to seek solutions and ultimately, readiness to accept and live with solutions.

Simultaneously, the scientists got valuable feedback which helped them to deal with technical matters with greater sensitivity to community values and to re-express information more clearly.

Watermark, like Landcare and CFA brigades, demonstrated the potent strength of facilitating and coordinating community based processes. These are the changes in individual and community attitudes to action which are essential to meeting climate change policy objectives.

These models also have parallels in the Vox Bandicoot “Sustainability Street” model.

Climatecare

Climatecare would combine and build on the best features of these successful models.

We propose that ClimateCare be established to complement Landcare. It would not subsume Landcare, although some Landcare groups may choose to become Climatecare groups. Similarly, other groups could choose to become Climatecare groups, subject to demonstrating the necessary potential to do so successfully.

Community-based groups such as Lighter Footprints already exist in many Victorian communities. They bring together enthusiastic, committed members of their communities, who wish to help each other, share ideas and experiences, improve public awareness, promote more sustainable living and encourage public policy orientated to sustainability. These groups provide fertile ground for building a network of community-based climate actions groups modelled on Landcare, the CFA and the Watermark Australia process.

Building on the strengths of Landcare and lessons learned from the CFA, Landcare and Watermark Australia, we propose that the Government investigate establishing a Climatecare model.

Climatecare would promote local take up of initiatives to reduce carbon emissions through actions based on analysis of and reduction in consumption of energy, goods and services. It would be facilitated with a light hand at state level, and could be supported by local government. Its strength would be the motivation and drive of local community groups.

The state support would be largely through the provision of information, access to scientific expertise and support for seminars and workshops. This way, the state could review the work of the groups and any need for refinement of the model.

Local groups (established or newly formed) would be attracted to join Climatecare for the access it provided to information, training and the advice of scientific experts, rather than to grants or equipment. Individuals and families would be encouraged to join established groups or form new groups.

Climatecare’s features would include:

1. Articulating and communicating separate roles for community groups and State and local government bodies;
2. Linking local community groups (“Climatecare groups”), local government and state government, using existing community-based agencies where available and sponsoring their establishment in other cases, in ways that empower and resource local communities, facilitate effective regional planning, ensure accountability to national stakeholders, and support adaptive sustainability management approaches

- Any group accepting the objectives of Climatecare and the use of its resources for related purposes would be entitled to become a Climatecare group
 - Climatecare groups would have legal status similar to Landcare groups (*i.e. each would be or become an incorporated body or become a member of an incorporated body with rules allowing groups that comply with the objectives of a Climatecare group to join it*) (Department of Primary Industries (Victoria) 2008)
 - Local community Climatecare groups could include Landcare groups, voluntary environmental action groups (e.g. CERES, Lighter Footprints, Sustainability Street Villages) and new groups which emerge in response to government support for Climatecare
 - Climatecare groups would be autonomous and not subject to government direction or restrictions on public comment
 - Local government would be empowered to
 - support the establishment of Climatecare groups within their communities
 - to take a pro-active role in incorporating sustainability into the many planning decisions it makes affecting land use and economic and social development and
 - Community-based agencies which could be encouraged to participate in Climatecare include catchment management committees, neighbourhood houses and learning centres;
3. Climatecare groups would -
- Be supported by
 - a secretariat to advise and assist community leaders in establishing and maintaining groups, to receive, evaluate and communicate feedback from groups and to liaise with scientific experts
 - expert advice from and feedback to scientists
 - coordinators (*usually part-time or shared between Climatecare groups*) similar to Landcare coordinators (Department of Primary Industries (Victoria) 2008)
 - Inform and educate people in their communities on achieving sustainability and on global, national and state targets in a similar way to Landcare e.g. site visits, demonstration sites, displays, workshops and forums
 - Share ideas and experiences on achieving more sustainable behaviour and practices
 - Help each other through working bees and other activities
 - Assist elderly, disabled and other people with limited capabilities to adopt more sustainable lifestyles
 - Join together in community projects to introduce more sustainable behaviour and practices
 - Facilitate access to public subsidies, grants, other funding and advice on governance arrangements, measures and technology orientated towards sustainable behaviour and practices by individuals, households, businesses and communities
 - Monitor local progress towards sustainability
 - Build social capital through engaging their local communities

- Collaborate in networks of Climatecare groups;
- 4. Development of a culture within government, public sector agencies and private providers of public services that supports participation by Climatecare groups;
- 5. Creating robust, healthy community- agency partnerships;
- 6. Acknowledging the importance of professional management of volunteer programs;
- 7. Developing rigorous and transparent cost sharing principles that can be used to allocate public money for work on privately owned land and facilities where there are community benefits
 - Climatecare groups would be eligible for professional management and funding support in similar ways to Landcare groups;
- 8. Identifying flexible policy packages to accommodate the diversity of citizen circumstances and motivations, including incentives for citizens to maintain the supply of public benefits, particularly for improving sustainability.

The table below compares Climatecare with other public-community-partnerships.

| Community involvement programs compared. | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| Feature | Landcare | Country Fire Authority | Watermark Australia | Climatecare |
| Governance | National and state administrative infrastructure Local groups largely autonomous | State legislation and administrative & coordinating infrastructure Local brigades largely autonomous | Watermark Australia administrative infrastructure and coordination. Links to scientific expertise. Local groups largely autonomous | State secretariat administrative and coordinating infrastructure Scientific expert advice and two-way feedback Local groups largely autonomous |
| Funding (including sponsorship) | Grants for equipment and plantables Salaries for co-ordinators Members voluntary | Grants for equipment Training facilities Salaries for regional officers Members voluntary | Funded by independent donors to VWT Participants voluntary Program of discussion topics prepared from Watermark Australia team's own reading, research and discussion with water experts | Grants for equipment Training opportunities Salaries for secretariat Support for scientific input Coordinators (<i>usually part-time or shared between Climatecare groups</i>) Members voluntary |
| Supervision & training | Workshops and conferences | Local brigades train own members Specialist training by CFA | Group Convenors brought together small groups | Workshops and conferences, supported by co-ordinators Notes to assist groups with Climatecare processes and technical issues |
| Activities | Revegetation Fencing Weeding Information dissemination (latest | – Responding to a variety of fire and emergency incidents – Fire safety building inspections | – Group Convenors convene monthly meetings to discuss water (e.g. prepared topics), over stated | – Information dissemination (latest research, government incentives & programs, new technologies & practices etc) – Feedback to scientific experts and to |

| Community involvement programs compared. | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| Feature | Landcare | Country Fire Authority | Watermark Australia | Climatecare |
| | <p>research, government incentives & programs, new tools & methods etc) Fund-raising</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delivering community awareness, education and safety programs - Post incident analysis and fire investigation - Fire prevention planning and land use planning at a municipal level - Working together with Forest Industry Brigades. | <p>period - 4 months</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - share their thoughts, anecdotes and 'folk-wisdom', - Group Convenors bring these back to the Watermark Australia team. - Validation process, and second run of sessions over four months with input from expert group - Findings written up by secretariat with input from experts | <p>secretariat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neighbourhood by neighbourhood household energy auditing & retrofitting - Neighbourhood by neighbourhood household water consumption auditing and retrofitting of water saving and recycling technology - Promotion of more energy efficient transport means and routes - Promotion and supervision of walking school bus - Operating a local household carbon budgeting scheme with emissions trading - Bike hire - Electric car hiring & pooling - Energy efficient power tool & appliance hire - Promotion and Maintenance of local, decentralised power supplies - Public landscaping/traffic calming - Trouble-shooting |

The table above compares Climatecare with Landcare, CFA Brigades and Watermark Australia. It shows the common features and strengths which are proposed to be incorporated in Climatecare.

Climatecare could be promoted internationally in the same way as Landcare which is increasingly recognised internationally, “is now underway in the USA, Philippines, South Africa and New Zealand” and being promoted in other countries (Landcare Australia, undated).

Conclusion

Climatecare is a public-community-partnership designed to bridge the gap between government policy making and policy acceptance and implementation at community level. It builds on tried and proven models of public-community partnership that are familiar and respected within both government and the community.

Climatecare can help deal with the most difficult aspect of climate change and sustainability policy– the challenge of winning public support and commitment.

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Appendix.

Lighter Footprints

Lighter Footprints is a small group of concerned residents from Surrey Hills, Canterbury and the local neighbourhood (Victoria, Australia) who came together in late 2006 to see where we might focus our energies in response to the pending changes to our climate. We have agreed to work together to reduce our own footprints on this earth. We want to address the issue of the continued survival of life on this planet from a local perspective, focussed around the overall reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Our approach is that:

- We are looking for action, rather than further debate.
- We recognise that climate change has been flagged for years; we hold an element of impatience to see some action taken.
- We also recognise that some of the actions we might press for are to improve the understanding and changed practice of those (many) who are just beginning to get the message, and to do so through a grass roots approach.
- We are unaligned to any political party. (This does not preclude members working with political parties where they choose.)
- We look to work out the hammer blows that will elicit the fastest change.
- We propose to take action on things we can control, and spread that as widely as possible.
- We will continue to write letters to politicians as an effective means of putting forward a position.
- We will learn from other activists and bring that learning to the group as part of the regular meeting process.
- We are a "Ginger Group" – gadflies ready to sting.
- We are keen to include other members of our community who are also concerned to improve what they do as individuals, households and a local community (Lighter Footprints, undated).

Albury-Wodonga Sustainability Alliance

The Albury-Wodonga Sustainability Alliance comprises five groups:

- a.. Wodonga and Albury Towards Climate Health (WATCH)
- b.. Border Eco-Living Project (BELP)
- c.. Eat Local Food (ELF)
- d.. Sustainable and Active Transport
- e.. Eco-Building

Families Facing Climate Change

Families Facing Climate Change is a group based in Ashburton, Melbourne, Australia. We formed in 2006 as a group of families concerned that our governments (state and federal) weren't doing enough to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

Our purpose is to empower the community to take action on climate change. This will be achieved largely through seeking to influence our decision makers to work towards reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. We are not aligned with any political organisation and strongly encourage all political parties to show leadership on this issue. We come from different backgrounds yet share the common goal of preserving our world for our children and subsequent generations.

Goals

1. To increase community awareness and knowledge of climate change.
2. To provide links to resources for people so that they can educate themselves on climate change.
3. To lobby local, state and federal governments on climate change.

We plan to achieve our goals through our website, various public forums and direct contact with politicians. We encourage others to raise the issue of climate change as widely as possible and welcome communication on this issue.

Locals Into Victoria's Environment (LIVE).

LIVE is a fast-growing group of around 200 concerned Victorians who are coming together to address detrimental human impacts on the planet, especially the threat of global warming. Our organization is independent, non-partisan and non-profit. We are based in Melbourne's City of Port Phillip, an inner Melbourne suburb that includes St Kilda, South Melbourne and Port Melbourne.

LIVE Goals

The primary goals of LIVE are:

raising awareness of the need to protect our world's vulnerable ecosystem and halt climate change;

encouraging our society's transition to a more healthy and sustainable economy; and motivating and supporting others in our community to collectively minimise our ecological footprint.

We believe that when many people join together, our voices become louder and stronger.

Local grassroots action CAN make a difference and is needed NOW!

LIVE Methods

LIVE applies polite pressure to all levels of government and industry to demand that meaningful, effective measures be taken immediately to ensure that all environmental costs are accounted for and that Victoria's unacceptable greenhouse gas emissions, a major contributor to climate change, are reduced starting now.

LIVE supports and works with leading environmental groups and other community based climate change action groups working for a future that is healthy and best for all.